

Open letter from Venezuelan Human Rights Organizations to H.E. Mr. Volker Türk regarding his visit to the country.

(Caracas, January 26th, 2023)

On behalf of the Venezuelan Human Rights Organizations, we extend our warmest welcome to H.E. Mr. Volker Türk, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) and express our wishes for the success in his work towards the benefit of our population's rights. All our efforts will always be aimed at strengthening international organizations for the protection of human rights, for which we have considered the work of UNHCHR towards Venezuela as an achievement for society, due to the continued deterioration of living conditions. For this reason, we will do everything in our power to improve the efficiency of your efforts. In this regard, we would like to inform and place on record a number of observations related to the work of the institution H.E. represents in our country:

1) We reiterate our demand to make public the text of the Memorandum of Understanding signed with the Venezuelan authorities, which will allow effective monitoring of the agreements and social control by civil society, especially the victims of human rights violations. We find it unacceptable that, contrary to the principle of transparency that should guide its work, the UNHCHR, can endorse the secrecy of information that, because of its impact on public policy, should be available to all Venezuelans.

2) We demand that the comprehensive mandate of the UNHCHR be fulfilled in our country and that the human rights protection component receive the same level of importance as that of technical assistance with the authorities. In this sense, we recall a reiterated request before the Office: that the protection of human rights in Venezuela requires a higher profile and the strengthening of the joint work of international mechanisms in the face of a State unwilling to comply with the recommendations of the UNHCHR recommendations.

3) As a fundamental issue, we require that the OHCHR field officers assigned to our country have the highest possible level of expertise to carry out their duties.

Furthermore, the high rotation rate of most of the officers -although improved in some cases- shows that a short time in the country hinders the continuity and effectiveness of their work. Therefore, we request that the officers remain in the field as long as possible to ensure the deepest possible understanding of the conflict and a better relationship with the diversity of social and political leaders, as well as with the victims of human rights violations.

4) As we have expressed to the OHCHR on previous occasions, we demand that official information in the reports on Venezuela should not be quoted literally as accurate, but should be duly checked against other sources. In addition, announcements by the authorities should not be recognized as fulfilled facts, which in the event of non-compliance, weakens the Office's reports.

5) It is also necessary, as we have requested on several occasions, that there be consistency in the timing of the OHCHR's statements on announcements or actions by the Venezuelan authorities. It should not be the case that announcements or measures that represent progress are immediately proclaimed, even via social networks, and that when they represent setbacks, comments are postponed until the Office presents its oral or written reports, as has been the case in recent years. This type of behavior creates a distorted opinion that there is more progress than setbacks. The seriousness of the matter is that on many occasions Venezuelan authorities make announcements that are not implemented, and yet the OHCHR does not clarify them, not even in its reports, leaving as true a matrix of opinion that there has been progress that has not taken place.

6) The various reports on Venezuela by the OHCHR have produced a series of recommendations to the authorities to reverse the different violations diagnosed. Taken as a whole, these recommendations should be an integral part of a national human rights plan to which the Venezuelan State is obliged to comply. Our organizations call for the establishment of a participatory and transparent follow-up mechanism on compliance or non-compliance with these recommendations, which should also be included in both oral updates and written reports on Venezuela.

7) It is important to activate the visit of the UN special rapporteurs and procedures of the United Nations, so it is essential to insist on the entry of those which are of the utmost importance, without limiting them to those invited by the Venezuelan State. In this regard, it is necessary for the OHCHR to play an active role and not to adhere to the premise of supposed neutrality under the argument of the independence of the rapporteurs, since it is part of its mandate to guarantee the visit of the procedures related to the rights that have been violated according to their own reports. Also, we urge the good offices of the OHCHR before the treaty bodies, since Venezuela has significant delays in many of them, such as the Committee against Torture and the Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights.

8) It is essential that the OHCHR, in accordance with its mandate, explicitly support other regional human rights mechanisms, and those from the United Nations, such as the International Independent Fact-Finding Mission, for which the lifting of the existing firewall is essential. The same applies to the International Criminal Court. These are all mechanisms with a common objective, even if they follow different methods and approaches to achieve it: to put an end to human rights violations in Venezuela.

9) In March 2018, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, stated that the country's context "does not satisfy in any way the minimum conditions for free and acceptable elections." For the 2021 regional and municipal elections, the UN system, through a panel of experts, conducted an independent and technical assessment of the electoral system. Also, the European Union Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) issued 23 recommendations to improve the guarantees and conditions in the framework of electoral processes in Venezuela. Of these 23 recommendations, the mission itself highlights seven priorities that have not been fully implemented. In the view of the imminent elections in Venezuela, the presidential in 2024 and the legislative in 2025, the OHCHR should not avoid pronouncing itself on the conditions under which the upcoming elections will be held, doing everything in its power to guarantee human rights in electoral processes and the right of Venezuelans to live in democracy, bearing in mind the

observations and recommendations of the UN panel of experts and other international observers in this regard.

10) Given that migration, asylum and refuge are areas of expertise for the new High Commissioner, it is necessary to influence the Venezuelan authorities to stop criminalizing those who forcibly leave the country, as well as those who return to it, acknowledging the dimension and seriousness of the human mobility crisis and establishing public policies to protect Venezuelans who cross our borders, addressing the most vulnerable populations from a gender, diversity and intersectionality perspective.

The work of the UNHCHR requires that his voice be raised publicly and at the highest level whenever necessary, and that joint efforts be stepped up to prevent and definitively stop the grave violations that continue to be systematically committed in Venezuela.

We reiterate the willingness of our organizations to establish the highest and best level of cooperation with the OHCHR, both for the implementation of its work and for the resolution of the issues raised, which will have an impact on a significant improvement of the human rights situation of Venezuelans.

1. A.C. MÉDICOS UNIDOS DE VENEZUELA
2. AC Conciencia Ciudadana
3. AC Las Carolinas
4. AC Las Vírgenes
5. AC Luna Nueva
6. AC Remanente
7. Acceso a la Justicia
8. Acción Solidaria
9. Acción Zuliana por la Vida (Azul Positivo)
10. ACOANA
11. Aconvida
12. Alerta Venezuela
13. Amigos Trasplantados de Venezuela
14. Asociación Civil Mujeres en Línea
15. Aula Abierta
16. Brisas del Guacarapo
17. Caleidoscopio Humano
18. CAMPO
19. Catedra de DDHH de la Universidad Centro occidental Lisandro Alvarado
20. CECODAP
21. Centro De Acción y Defensa por los Derechos Humanos (CADEF)

22. Centro de Derechos Humanos de la Universidad Católica Andrés Bello (CDH-UCAB)
23. Centro de Derechos Humanos de la Universidad Metropolitana (CDH-Unimet)
24. Centro de Justicia y Paz (CEPAZ)
25. Centro LGBTIQ+ de Mérida
26. Centro para la Paz y Derechos Humanos de la Universidad Central de Venezuela
27. Ciudadanía Con Compromiso
28. Civilis Derechos Humanos
29. Clima21
30. CODEHCIU
31. Codevida
32. Codhez
33. Colegio de Médicos Monagas
34. Comisión de DDHH de la Federación Venezolana de Colegios de Abogados del estado Apure
35. Comisión de la Universidad de Los Andes contra la violencia de género
36. Comisión Nacional de DDHH de la Federación de Colegios de Abogados de Venezuela del estado Táchira
37. comisión nacional de DDHH de la federación de colegios de abogados de Venezuela - Mérida
38. Comisión Nacional de DDHH de la Federación del Colegio de Abogados de Venezuela del estado Lara
39. Comisión Nacional de DDHH del Estado Monagas de la FCAV
40. Comité de DDHH - La Carucieña
41. Comunidad en Movimiento AC
42. Consorven
43. Control Ciudadano, para la Seguridad, la Defensa y La Fuerza Armada Nacional
44. Defensactiva
45. Defiende Venezuela
46. Epikeia Derechos Humanos
47. Equipo de defensa de derechos humanos del estado Táchira (EDDHET)
48. Equipo de Proyectos y Asesoría Social-EDEPA
49. Espacio Público
50. EXCUBITUS Derechos Humanos en Educación
51. Federación Nacional de Sociedades de Padres y Representantes -FENASOPADRES
52. FUNCAMAMA
53. Fundación Agua Sin Fronteras
54. Fundación Aguaclara
55. Fundación de Derechos Humanos de los Llanos (Fundehullan)
56. Fundación Mavid Carabobo
57. FundaRedes
58. FUNDAVAL
59. Gobiérnatec
60. INCIDE
61. Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas de la UCAB
62. IPYS VENEZUELA
63. LABO Ciudadano
64. Laboratorio de Paz
65. Movimiento SOMOS
66. Mulier
67. Observatorio de Derechos Humanos Universidad de Los Andes
68. Observatorio Global de Comunicación y Democracia
69. Observatorio Venezolano de Prisiones

70. Observatorio Venezolano de Violencia
71. OC Brisas del Orinoco
72. OC La Choza del Espíritu Santo
73. OC Libertador
74. OC San Rafael
75. Odevida, Capítulo Venezuela
76. Oficina de DDHH del Vicariato Apostólico de Puerto Ayacucho
77. Organización StopVIH
78. Padres Organizados de Venezuela
79. Prepara Familia
80. Programa de Promoción de Derechos Indígenas de la Amazonía venezolana
"Wayamoutheri"
81. Programa Venezolano de Educación Acción en Derechos Humanos
82. PROMEDEHUM
83. Red de Activistas Ciudadanos por los DDHH
84. Redes Ayuda
85. Red por los Derechos Humanos de Niños, Niñas y Adolescentes (REDHNNA).
86. Una Ventana a la Libertad
87. Unión Afirmativa
88. Unión Vecinal para la Participación Ciudadana AC
89. Venezuela Diversa AC
90. Voto joven